

Don't stop on the emergency lane, drivers warned

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KUALA LUMPUR: While thousands prepare to head back to their hometowns for Hari Raya Aidilfitri next week, many are unaware that pulling over in the emergency lane – even briefly to answer a phone call – is an offence.

Road Transport Department (JPJ) senior assistant enforcement officer (policy) Norazman Nordin said this was among the common reasons given by motorists caught stopping in the emergency lanes, besides taking photos while travelling in convoy and pulling over to rest before continuing their journey.

“Answering a phone call is not considered an emergency, so motorists are not allowed to simply stop in the emergency lane.

“However, JPJ takes a diplomatic approach and will direct drivers not to stop and move along so as not to disrupt the smooth flow of traffic,” he said in response to a question from the moderator at a road safety forum themed “Driving Requires Brains, Not Phones” organised by the Vehicle Theft and Accident Reduction Council of Malaysia yesterday.

He said it is an offence under Section 17A of the Road Traffic Rules (Amended 1996) to intentionally stop in the emergency



Drive safe: Putri Narisa Ahmad Bakhtiar (right) and Wajdi Azhari Che Hamid pledging not to use a mobile phone while driving during a road safety forum in Kuala Lumpur. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

lane to answer a phone call without using a hands-free device.

If found guilty, offenders can be fined up to RM2,000, jailed for up to six months, or both.

Norazman also reminded motorists that using a smartphone while driving is among the seven major offences under the Road Transport Act, which carries a RM300 compound.

“Many still assume that phone use while driving only refers to answering calls, when in fact even scrolling the screen is con-

sidered an offence if a hands-free device is not used.

“Besides the fine, offenders may also accumulate demerit points, which could lead to the revocation of their driving licence and a freeze on reapplying for up to 12 months,” he added.

Emergency lanes can be used by motorists when they are converted into smart lanes at major stretches of the highway.

Meanwhile, Universiti Putra Malaysia’s road safety expert Prof Kulanthayan KC Mani said that

even hands-free devices do not fully eliminate the dangers of using a phone while driving.

“Driving requires full concentration. Even when your hands are free, your mind may still be distracted,” he said.

He advised motorists to plan their journeys carefully during the festive season.

“Know where you can safely stop and rest instead of relying entirely on navigation apps,” he said, adding that drivers should also consider downloading apps



that help detect fatigue levels.

Kulanthayan said that 649,809 accidents were reported in 2025, involving 6,537 deaths last year, with the majority linked to mobile phone use while driving.

Kuala Lumpur police deputy chief of the crime prevention and community safety department Asst Comm Foo Chek Seng said parents should set a good example for their children by not using smartphones while driving.

“Some parents are also careless when it comes to obeying road rules, including using their phones while driving, which can confuse their children,” he said, adding that traffic enforcement operations have been actively carried out since October.

Motordata Research Consortium Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Steve Miller cautioned that accidents caused by risky behaviour, including phone use while driving, could also complicate insurance claims after a crash.